

Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research 20 (11): 1449-1452, 2014

ISSN 1990-9233

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DOI: 10.5829/idosi.mejsr.2014.20.11.21076

Da'wah Applications in Counseling Process

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Abstract: This article discusses some aspects of Islamic missionary applied in the counseling process at the Federal Territory Islamic Religious Department Kuala Lumpur (JAWI), Malaysia. A total of 310 participants from 886 clients at the counseling unit, were selected as respondents. This study found that counselors play a significant role in regards to Islamic missionary since most of the counselors have a degree in Islamic studies. As a counselor for missionary program, they are not only responsible for improving the conflict, but also should give fullest effort in preventing divorce and preserving harmonious environment amongst the clients. From the observations on the process of counseling, as well as information from counselors, the study concludes that several approaches employed in the counseling process in parallel with the application of *da'wah* to emphasis *al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar* (enjoining the good and forbidding the evil) while dealing with couples with marital problems, include such aspects as Islamic family laws, the rights and responsibility of husband and wife, advantages of patient, prohibition of divorce and advice and instruction.

Key words: Islamic counseling • Da'wah • Marriage • Divorce • Islamic family law

INTRODUCTION

The main goal of this study is to analyze the counseling process conducted on married couples by the Consultant and Family Development Unit (UPPK), the Federal Territory Islamic Religious Department (JAWI). The study investigates the presence of Islamic missionary, or in particular, to analyze da'wah application in the counseling process. JAWI is one of the Islamic Religious Departments in Malaysia that has set up counseling unit to handle problems in Muslim community. Since 2011, the name of UPPK has been changed to Marriage and Family Development Division. There are three units in this division; which are Finance and Administration Unit; Marriage, Divorce and Reconciliation Unit; and Consultation and Development of Islamic Family Unit [1]. However, of its functions, Marriage and Family Development Division certainly responsible for all issues about marriage, divorce, reconciliation, complaints, or solving marital problems

before making a claim to the Shariah Court, as well as planning and implementing programs to strengthening the family institution.

In recent years, awareness of the family problems resulting to marriages breakdown has increased [2] and the problems are no longer considered as individual issues, but have become social problems which required special attention. Social problems such as collapse of the family life, more women delaying marriage, or single mothers have become common in recent years. Single mothers have become a common phenomenon and a rising percentage of it is a universal trend for all the countries all over the world [3]. These social problems which have significantly arisen lately, partly due to the negative impact of rapid industrial development, migration of rural youth to urban and lifestyle changes as a result of modernization and urbanization [4].

More importantly, the social problem that decrease religious awareness not only lead to one's ignorance of

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his religious duty but will also deviate him from a strong belief in God. The rapid socio-economic changes in this country, coupled with family breakdown also ended in divorce among many Muslim couples which later on become a national problem. As a result of this rapid development and the subsequent impacts, the traditional family functions gradually have been taken over by other institutions. Yaacob [5] points out that urbanization process occurred have changed many of the traditional functions of the family. The traditional functions of the family such as in economy, education, religion, protection and recreation have been taken over by other institutions and agencies that perform similar functions in human society. As a result, the effectiveness of the family institutions in playing their roles has become weaker.

Due to the significant changes within Muslims families in recent years [5], crises and stresses cannot be avoided in family as family systems change over time [6]. Application of Islamic values in counseling can help reduce marital conflicts [7]. In Islam, clients should be choosing whatever decision in counseling in accordance to Islamic values. Thus, the need for the instilling Islamic values in counseling process is felt in urgent need.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In Malaysia nowadays, many religious departments have employed the counseling services as a method of solving couples having marriage problem and to resolve conflicts and improve their relationships. There are eight out of fourteen Islamic Religious Departments in Malaysia that took the initiative to establish counseling units in their departments, the phenomenon that shows there is a new tendency amongst Muslims to seek advice from those in authority to solve their personal and marriage problems. The Federal Territory Islamic Religious Department Kuala Lumpur (JAWI) is purposively selected as Islamic Religious Departments for the study. The department is selected because every day the department is receiving many couples with marital problems, or many problems related to Islamic family matters are bring forwards to this department.

The objective of this study is to investigate the presence of Islamic missionary, or in particular, to analyze da'wah application in the counseling process conducted to couples with marital problems at the Islamic Religious Departments chosen, particularly at the counseling unit (UPPK), the Federal Territory Islamic Religious Department Kuala Lumpur (JAWI), Malaysia. To meet this objective, a total of 310 participants from 886 clients who

came to seek counseling services at the UPPK, JAWI, were selected as respondents. The data were collected using case files, structured and unstructured questionnaires as well as participant observations. The data were analyzed through descriptive approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Da'wah Applications in Counseling Process: Although Islam places great emphasis on each person's individual responsibility to choose right over wrong, it does not recognize any decision that is contrary to the Islamic principles. One cannot make his or her own decision in regards to religious matters particularly that related to family affairs. He has to consult those religious scholars or counselors while dealing with issues associated with his family life. From the observations on the process of counseling, as well as information obtained from the counselor, the study found that da'wah application exists in counseling process at UPPK. This includes the emphasis on *al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar* (enjoining the good and forbidding the evil) while dealing with couples with marital problems, particularly in the aspects such as Islamic family laws, the rights and responsibilities of husband and wife, advantages of patient, prohibition of divorce and advice and instruction.

Islamic Family Laws: Many couples experiencing family conflict are those who do not well equipped or aware with Islamic teachings. Indeed, knowledge and understanding of Islamic laws pertaining to marriage and family life is necessary as it is part of obedience to Allah. Similarly, the absence of law that functions to control every aspect of life, will indulge the family into chaos and anarchy. There was a case when a client complaint that her partner has a mistress. In other words, she suspects her husband to have an affair with another woman, who causes him abandon and ignore his responsibility as a husband. In this context, the counselor told respondents such a relationship without marriage is forbidden in Islam and the act is considered as adultery.

The act of adultery is a kind of sin. Those man and woman living together without marriage are living in a sin. To create a happy and harmonious environment in family life, the counselor will then advise each member of the family, especially the husband or wife to stay away from any kind of evil act in their family relationship. A family who adhere to the laws of Allah produces children with affection and love for religion. Such feelings can bind

affection between various members of the family and thus creating harmonious relationship. Counselors at UPPK, are trying to make their clients understand these Islamic family laws.

Rights and Responsibilities of Husband and Wife: The right and responsibility of husband and wife are important to understand in order for couples to build the harmonious relationship. The main sources of stress in marriage are disagreements between the husband and wife over money or childrearing, or on partner's job demand [6]. The study also found that counselors always available to brief their client on matters pertaining to marriage laws. They touch on the rights and responsibilities that must be borne by the husband or wife throughout their marital relationship. Many problems exist as a result of misunderstanding of the right and responsibilities of both parties. The right of husband and wife is not clearly specified especially when dealing with matter pertaining to financial management such as the lack of enough money to pay bills, maintain the mortgage or rent, or buy sufficient food and other necessities. Similarly, disagreements may spring between the couple from determining what bills to pay, how much to pay for certain items and whose money to be used for paying those bills. In this situation, the counselor has to give proper advice on how to create a harmonious environment while dealing with the above mentioned situation. Many respondents who complain about domestic conflict say that their problems in many ways revolve around the issue of rights and responsibilities. It is the responsibility of counselors to make their clients understand their rights and responsibilities.

Advantage of Patient: Islam places great emphasis on patient. Allah has guaranteed those who are patient and Allah will give them reward without measure. Many verses in the Qur'an stressed the importance of patient in everyday life. In the Chapter al-Baqarah (2), verse 153, Allah says: "O ye who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance and prayer; for God is with those who patiently persevere", while verse 155 in the same chapter, Allah says: "Be sure We shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere" [8]. There are other hundreds verses on patient in the Qur'an.

All couples should adopt an attitude of forgiveness and kindness in family life [9]. There are respondents who

came to UPPK with feeling of temper, often cursed and always hit the respondents. In this context, respondents were told that the best way to do is to make a police report on such action. However, the situation is somehow respondents are advised to be patient for all the disasters that have befallen him. Hopefully with patience, Allah will give it a way out. By the nature of the patient should be planted into every person who called husband or wife. Patience is the greatest virtue. One aspect of da'wah who was adopted by counselors is inviting his or her client to be patient. Patient is necessary to guarantee the household environment to keep harmony. If the spouses do not have patience, conflict in household easily happen. A couple who have patiently properties will always seek the help of Allah so that households receive the blessings and the problems can be overcome.

Prohibition of Divorced: Many clients also decided to divorce after ending counseling. Divorce is lawful act but hated by Allah. When a household cannot be saved, then Islam allows the couple to end up their marriage relationship, or divorce. The aim is to help couples who suffer from domestic conflict. As long as there is still a possibility of other solutions that can be taken, then the divorce should not be allowed to happen. This indicates that divorce is not a small matter and it may not be done just because of a small problem. Prohibition of divorce is also aspects of Islamic missionary applied by counselors. Counselors often told divorce is one thing that is hated by Allah. They do not easily allow the respondent to take the decision to divorce even if in the end many respondents who came to counseling session decided to divorce. Whether the couple decided to divorce or not, it is not an issue, but the counselor, as a preacher has a responsibility to provide an understanding of the troubled couples that divorce is one thing that is not liked by Islam and is supposed to be avoided.

Advice and Instruction: Advice and teaching are another aspect of Islamic missionary who were also applied in the counseling process at UPPK. Arguably, advice and teaching aspect are the most widely applied aspects of counseling in UPPK. This is because in the larger context, the Islamic missionary aspect as discussed earlier, also including advice and instruction. Advice as well as good and effective teaching can reinforce stance and belief in Allah and thus can also provide reassurance to couples experiencing domestic conflict to make the changes needed. Some women have to bear and manage their own

matters related to finance, such as spending the kids, pay the bills of electricity, water and telephone bills and kitchen expenses. This situation certainly poses conflict in household. This is especially true as both husband and wife are in the paid labor force. Through advice and important lessons, awareness and spirit to create a happy family can be raised.

Many of the problems occurred in household also arising because the client and the spouse have no knowledge on the rights and responsibilities. To find the limits of the rights and responsibilities of a husband and wife requires certain knowledge. Respondents are advised to always be diligent in seeking knowledge related to the rights and responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

Awareness of the family problems resulting to marriages breakdown due to the changes within Muslims families has increased in recent years. Crises cannot be avoided in family nowadays because family systems change over time. Islamic scholars feel that the need for the application of and instilling Islamic values in marriage counseling process to help reduce marital conflicts in family life is in urgent need. This article discusses some aspects of Islamic missionary applied in the counseling process at the Federal Territory Islamic Religious Department Kuala Lumpur (JAWI), Malaysia. This study found counselors play a significant role in regards to Islamic missionary since most of the counselors have a degree in Islamic studies. For them clients should not take decisions contrary to Islamic law. Although the client is entitled to make a decision on his own, but the counselor's role and his concern with legal matters in the decision is necessary. From the observations on the process of counseling, as well as information from counselors, aspects of Islamic missionary particularly associated with *al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar* applied in the process of counseling. Specific aspects of da'wah activities in regards to counseling process such as Islamic family laws, the rights and responsibilities of husband and wife, advantages of patient, prohibition of divorce and advice and instruction also discussed in this paper.

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